



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **CHILD PORNOGRAPHER SENTENCED TO MORE THAN 12 YEARS**

*Pine Hill, New York man admitted to having sex with a 9-year-old boy*

Albany, New York – A former youth hostel owner and long time child pornographer who admitted to having sex with a child, was sentenced Monday in U.S. District Court to more than 12 years in prison following an extensive investigation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Thomas Pidel, 40, of Pine Hill, New York was sentenced for producing and receiving child pornography and possessing a firearm after being dishonorably discharged from the military. The investigation began in January of 2004 when Albany agents received information on Pidel's criminal activity through ICE's Operation Predator, a nationwide initiative to halt the exploitation of children by targeting cyber pornographers, criminal aliens, and sex tourists. ICE special agents obtained a search warrant based on leads generated from earlier seizures and credit card information from a Belarus-based Internet child-porn company.

The president and technical administrator of the Belarus-based child pornography and money-laundering enterprise both pleaded guilty March 1 to running the operation, which catered to untold thousands of subscribers worldwide. Seven others in the company had also previously pleaded guilty. The ICE-led investigation resulted in the arrest of more than 1,200 child-porn website subscribers.

Jack McQuade, ICE Resident Agent-in-Charge in Albany said, "We have put a very evil and dangerous child predator behind bars for more than 12 years." McQuade stated that individuals such as Pidel think they can hide behind the anonymity of the Internet. "As ICE agents we are committed to detecting and bringing to justice people who prey on children and use the Internet to exploit our most vulnerable citizens," McQuade concluded.

Glenn T. Suddaby, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of New York, prosecuted Pidel. He was sentenced Monday by U.S. District Judge Thomas J. McAvoy in Federal Court in Albany following his convictions for producing and receiving child pornography and possessing a firearm after having been dishonorably discharged from the Armed Forces.

Pidel operated a resort that catered to youth and adults in the Belleayre resort region. Searches at the resort resulted in the seizure of 4 computers, two laptop computers and numerous computer disks. Hundreds of images of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct were recovered from the computer disks.

Pidel pled guilty on June 15, 2004 and during his plea he admitted that he took sexually explicit images of a 9-year-old boy between 1999 and 2003 and that he had engaged in oral sex with this child. Pidel subscribed to an Internet site called [www.sunshineboys.com](http://www.sunshineboys.com) that contained images of male minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct.

During the investigation ICE agents determined that he downloaded hundreds of sexually explicit images of minors from a variety of Internet sites. Some of the images he received depict prepubescent minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct.

Pidel acknowledged that he has an attraction to boys and that he even took medication to control his urges. He also admitted that he possessed a rifle in his home after having been dishonorably discharged from the United States Air Force in 1994. He was discharged based upon military convictions involving minors. He served 36 months in military prison on those convictions.

The case was investigated by ICE's Office of Investigations, the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Ulster County District Attorneys Office, the New York State Police, and the Shandaken Police Department.

ICE encourages the reporting of suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. Investigators staff this hotline around the clock. Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*